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From: Rodriguez, Elias
Sent: Thur 4/9/2015 12:50:58 PM
Subject: Sirenusa Response (St John VI Incident) News Clips

What is Methyl Bromide? Have you been exposed?

CNN Erin Burnett Out Front

<http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/04/08/erin-dnt-casarez-family-poisoned-in-paradise-pesticide.cnn-ap>

April 7, 2015

A Delaware family got sick at a resort in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Preliminary EPA results find methyl bromide was present in the unit where they stayed.

Three More Companies Found with Methyl Bromide originating in Puerto Rico

Wednesday, April 8, 2015 10:44 AM

Caribbean Business Puerto Rico.com

Two extermination companies on St. Croix and one more on St. Thomas have stocks of pesticide containing methyl bromide, the Planning and Natural Resources Department indicated Tuesday evening.

Planning will determine from the companies' records whether they have used the banned substance and, if so, when and where.

Planning has already identified Terminix as the St. Thomas-based company that fumigated a unit at Sirenusa condominium complex on St. John using Meth-O-Gas. It said Tuesday that the company fumigated the kitchen of a lower Sirenusa unit on March 18. Two days later, four members of a Delaware family suffered apparent chemical poisoning after staying in another Sirenusa unit.

After treatment at Roy L. Schneider Hospital on St. Thomas, they were airlifted to mainland hospitals.

"This unfortunate incident poses a threat to the residents and visitors to the territory. It will not be treated lightly and the department will take appropriate enforcement action," acting Planning Commissioner Dawn L. Henry said.

She said Terminix will be held fully accountable for its actions in exposing the community to substances that it knows or should have known were banned from use in the territory.

"Our prayers and thoughts are with the Esmond family and we pray for their full recovery," Henry said, referring to the Delaware family sickened at Sirenusa.

Reached late Tuesday, Planning spokesman Jamal Nielsen said he had no information on the two St. Croix companies and one St. Thomas company mentioned in the press release but not yet identified.

According to the press release, during the weeks of March 23 and March 30, Planning inspected pest control companies throughout the territory to determine whether those companies are using methyl bromide. As part of that inspection, Planning conducted an inventory of the pesticide products in storage and requested that the companies provide Material Safety Data Sheets pertaining to all the pesticides used, stored or sold in the territory containing methyl bromide.

Currently, Planning and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are in custody of the quarantined methyl bromide canister on St. Thomas and are collaborating to secure the quarantined canisters on St. Croix, the press release indicates.

As part of the ongoing investigation, Planning is also working with other agencies, including the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs, EPA and the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture to locate the distributor of methyl bromide to the territory. Planning said on March 25 the pesticide containing methyl bromide used in the Sirenusa incident came from Puerto Rico.

Additionally, Planning said on March 26 that Terminix used pesticide containing methyl bromide at another Sirenusa location in October 2014 and at three locations on St. Croix in 2014.

Planning said it inspected the Terminix offices on St. Thomas on March 23 and interviewed Terminix employees. After confirming that Terminix possessed methyl bromide and learning of other locations where Terminix used the banned methyl bromide products, Planning issued a "Stop Use Order" to Terminix in St. Thomas and on St. Croix.

Both orders required that Terminix immediately stop using pesticides containing methyl bromide in the territory, provide Planning with all documentation relating to the purchase, use, and application of pesticide products containing methyl bromide over the last 12 months, quarantine the subject pesticides, and refrain from moving, destroying, altering or affecting the subject pesticides.

On March 23, Planning and EPA launched a joint investigation into the methyl bromide release at Sirenusa. This investigation included air quality sampling for the presence of various compounds of interest.

VI Source

Three More Companies Found with Methyl Bromide, Planning Says

By Lynda Lohr — April 7, 2015

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On March 23, Planning and EPA launched a joint investigation into the methyl bromide release at Sirenusa. This investigation included air quality sampling for the presence of various compounds of interest.

The press release indicates that EPA Region II Director Judith Enck visited Sirenusa and subsequently met with Gov. Kenneth Mapp to provide a status update and plan of action.

Planning said anyone with questions or concerns regarding any pesticide use can contact the department's Division of Environmental Protection's Pesticide Program at 1-340-774-3320, extension 5193, on St. Thomas and 1-340-773-1082, extension 2272, on St. Croix.

Methyl bromide found at more V.I. exterminators

9 Apr 2015

The Virgin Islands Daily News

By ALDETH LEWIN

At a press conference on St. Croix on Wednesday, Gov. Kenneth Mapp said the government will not reveal the names of the additional companies in possession of methyl bromide until a final report is issued.

The local investigation into methyl bromide poisoning on St. John that left a Delaware family hospitalized revealed that several other pest control companies in the territory also use the toxic pesticide.

At a press conference on St. Croix on Wednesday, Gov. Kenneth Mapp said the government will not reveal the names of the additional companies in possession of methyl bromide until a final report is issued.

He said if the companies are using the chemical in an approved manner, they will not be in trouble. If they are found to have misused the pesticide in a residential area—which is restricted—their names will be revealed, Mapp said.

The family of four — Stephen Esmond, Theresa Devine and their two teenage sons, Sean and Ryan — had rented Villa Capri at Sirenusa Condominium Resort on St. John from March 14 through March 22.

On March 20, the family was admitted to Schneider Hospital with symptoms of methyl bromide poisoning. Over the course of a few days, all four were airlifted to stateside hospitals for continued treatment.

Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency, which is investigating the incident with the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources, confirmed that the chemical found in an adjacent unit was methyl bromide.

The joint investigation found that on March 18, two days before the family was hospitalized, Terminix treated the unit below the one in which the family was staying. Terminix told investigators they were treating for powder post beetles, an insect that eats wood.

Methyl bromide is an odorless gas used as a fumigated pesticide. However, its use is highly restricted because of its toxicity, and it is not supposed to be used in residential environments.

DPNR has issued two “stop use” orders to Terminix, one for each district, to stop using any product containing methyl bromide and to quarantine any of the chemical that may be in the company’s possession. A criminal investigation has been launched by the U. S. Justice Department, according to documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

“I want you to know, the public to know, that Terminix and the other companies in the territory will be held fully accountable for the misapplication and use of these poisons,” Mapp said Wednesday. “They should have known, they are in a position to know, that these poisons have been banned.”

Mapp said he has asked the V.I. Licensing and Consumer Affairs Department to join the investigations and conduct a full review of Terminix and any other company that may warrant it.

Mapp said he will wait for the final report from DPNR, which should include recommendations about possible legal action the local government can take.

“We will make a determination if we need to mobilize and implement some additional legal review by our local department of justice,” Mapp said.

“We will spare no resources in assisting the family to the extent that they may need assistance. We will spare no resources in ensuring that no other residents or visitor to the territory is exposed to these noxious gases, and we will ensure that the companies who have these gasses in their possession and those that have used them thus far, will pay this government for any and all expenses that we have to endure to bring and rectify this problem,” Mapp said.

Aspokesman for the Esmond family said earlier this week that Devine has been discharged from the hospital and is doing well; Esmond is improving and stable; but the two boys still are in critical condition.

According to the EPA, the shortterm inhalation of methyl bromide can cause severe injury to the

lungs. Acute and chronic inhalation of methyl bromide can lead to neurological effects in humans, according to the EPA.

EPA Region II Director Judith Enck visited Sirenusa and subsequently met with Gov. Kenneth Mapp to provide a status update and plan of action.

Toxic Substance Used Before at Virgin Islands Complex Where Family Fell Ill

Family Possibly Poisoned at Virgin Island Resort After Fumigation

April 7

NBC Nightly News <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/toxic-substance-used-virgin-islands-complex-where-family-fell-ill-n337911>

The toxic chemical that sickened a Delaware family staying at a Virgin Island resort had been used there over the course of the last year, the Environmental Protection Agency said.

The EPA was notified on March 20 that a Delaware family staying at Sirenusa Resort in Cruz Bay, St. John had been hospitalized after a fumigation days earlier at the resort. The agency found that methyl bromide had been used during the fumigation, as well as at other times.

"I can confirm that we know that methyl bromide was applied in apartments in addition to the one that we're focused on that's causing the health concern with the family," Judith Enck, regional administrator with EPA Region 2, told NBC News on Wednesday. "It was used in other apartments around the same time that it was applied here, and also in different apartments in the complex within the past year."

Methyl bromide, an odorless pesticide and neurotoxin, was banned for indoor residential use in 1984 by the EPA, which also holds authority over the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Inhaling the chemical can "be fatal or cause serious acute illness or delayed lung or nervous system injury," according to the EPA.

Stephen Esmond, his wife Theresa Devine, and their two teenage sons were hospitalized in Philadelphia after their exposure. Devine had been discharged as of Monday and Esmond is in stable condition — but the two boys are still in critical condition, a family spokesman told NBC News.

Methyl bromide was used in a first-floor apartment. Esmond and his family were staying on the second floor of that unit, Enck said.

Enck said the chemical was used by pest control company Terminix.

Sea Glass Vacations LLC, the company that manages many of the rental units at Sirenusa, said it was unaware Terminix allegedly used the chemical, and it has cancelled all of its contracts with Terminix.

The United States Department of Justice has also opened a criminal investigation into the case, according to a Securities and Exchange Commission report filed by ServiceMaster Global Holdings, Inc., the parent company of Terminix.

"We are sending our thoughts and prayers to the family impacted by this tragic incident, as well as those around them," Sea Glass Vacations said in a statement. "We remain committed to full cooperation with all local and federal authorities currently investigating this matter."

The company said only one unit was fumigated by Terminix in the recent case. Sea Glass Vacations said Terminix may have used the chemical when fumigating four other units in October. Terminix has been providing pest control at the property since late 2013. Terminix did not respond to a request for comment.

The EPA is investigating whether there have been any other reports of medical symptoms in the complex over the past year. The Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry is interviewing tourists who stayed in the apartments where methyl bromide was used and interviewing housekeeping staff, Enck said.

The Department of Justice could bring criminal charges forward if the EPA investigation finds evidence of wrongdoing.

The first and top priority is protecting public health," Enck said. "Second is to hold responsible parties accountable for any violation of environmental laws."

New York Times/ By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

US Probes Pesticide Poisoning That Sickened Family in USVI

APRIL 7, 2015, 3:19 P.M. E.D.T.

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — U.S. authorities have determined that the highly toxic pesticide methyl bromide caused a Delaware family to become seriously ill at a U.S. Virgin Islands resort, and that the chemical was used at the resort several times in the past year, officials said Tuesday.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said it is contacting people including employees at Sirenusa resort in St. John to determine how many others might have been exposed to the pesticide. It was banned for indoor residential use in 1984.

"Methyl bromide is a potent neurotoxin, so it really affects your central nervous system," EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck said in a telephone interview.

The Esmond family had rented a second-floor condominium at Sirenusa, a resort of 22 villas, late last month. The family began having seizures and was airlifted to hospitals in the U.S., ABC news reported Monday, quoting a written statement by family attorney James Maron that said the two parents are recovering but their two sons are in critical condition. Maron did not return calls seeking independent confirmation.

The U.S. Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation.

Enck said the pesticide was used March 28 on the condominium's first floor, and agents are trying to determine how much was employed. She said the EPA found that methyl bromide was used at other Sirenusa units in the past year, but declined to say how many, citing the investigation.

Sea Glass Vacations LLC, which rents units at Sirenusa, said in a statement it has terminated its contract with Terminix and the townhome under investigation is unoccupied.

"We are sending our thoughts and prayers to the family impacted by this tragic incident," the company said. "We remain committed to full cooperation with all local and federal authorities."

Terminix spokesman Pete Tosches said in a statement that the company is conducting its own investigation and is cooperating with authorities.

"We're committed to performing all work we undertake in a way that is safe for our employees, customers and the public," he said.

Enck said the EPA is awaiting results of air and wipe samples taken from the condominium.

WMFD

Pesticides May Be To Blame For Sending Family To Hospital

April 8, 2015

By: Larry Stine

A vacation for one family in the Caribbean went horribly wrong.

And experts think it may have to do with pesticides.

Jean Casarez reports.

A spring vacation for the Esmond family in the U.S. Virgin Islands was supposed to be a tropical paradise.

But just hours after checking into their St. Johns condo, the family of four thought they had food poisoning.

Paramedics were called to the Delaware family's villa on March 20 after Steve Esmond fell unconscious.

His wife and two sons began having seizures.

The family was rushed to a hospital in nearby St. Thomas and then airlifted to the United

States after it appears they had been exposed to a lethal pesticide.

"Methyl bromide is a potent neurotoxin and in fact the EPA banned it's use for indoor applications all the way back in 1984," says Judith Enck, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator.

Ignoring EPA regulations, federal investigators say methyl bromide was sprayed to kill bugs, but odorless fumes reached the second floor where the family was staying.

"This is...a very toxic pesticide that can damage your central nervous system," Enck says.

The family says Steve Esmond is now out of his coma and improving, his two sons are still in critical condition/

His wife is out of the hospital and undergoing therapy.

Indoor use of the toxin is illegal but the EPA says it has never seen such devastating indoor case before raising serious questions about where else this chemical is being used.

"Today it's used primarily in agriculture," Enck says. "For instance it's injected into the soil of strawberry fields."

"If the chemical is put in the ground near the strawberries, how do we know it's not going to get into our systems when we eat strawberries?" asks CNN's Jean Casarez.

"Well, we, we trust that uh the strawberry producers are making sure that there's not excess pesticide residue on strawberries," Enck says. " You definitely want to wash them really good."

According to the Journal of Industrial Medicine, field workers were poisoned at a Connecticut nursery in 1990 after methyl bromide was injected into the soil.

And in 2011, the CDC reports warehouse workers in California were taken ill after exposure to grapes imported from Chile fumigated with methyl bromide.

KMBC

Methyl bromide exposure survivor shares ordeal, long-term impact

Neurotoxin suspected of causing Delaware family's illness

Apr 07, 2015

By Haley Harrison

KANSAS CITY, Mo. —Members of a Delaware family got sick during a spring break trip to St. John, and the Environmental Protection Agency is investigating whether they were poisoned by a toxic pesticide.

Investigators think the condo below the one where the family was staying was sprayed with methyl bromide on the day the family checked in.

Two boys in the family are in critical condition and will likely have permanent damage if they survive.

A Kansas City, Kansas, woman said she's still fighting the side effects after she and her father were exposed to methyl bromide 43 years ago.

Methyl bromide was once used as a flame retardant. Marijane Green said her father, a firefighter, brought home an old fire extinguisher in 1972, but had no idea it was leaking a dangerous neurotoxin.

"It's something that's unbelievable," Green said. "It's a nightmare."

Now in her 50s, Green said she still suffers from tremors caused by the exposure. She said her father was never the same, living with seizures nearly every moment of his remaining 11 years.

"He couldn't walk. He couldn't talk. He couldn't use his hands," she said.

With another case in the headlines, she said the memories are fresh.

"It's very concerning that it's out there still," she said.

University of Kansas Hospital toxicologist Dr. Stephen Thornton said methyl bromide is still used as a pesticide. It's banned for indoor use, but can still be used on such crops as strawberries.

"We've used it for a long time. We've used it to kill other things," he said. "Nobody knows how it works, 100 percent."

The odorless gas kills nerve cells and the hope of a full recovery.

"Even now, I have rheumatoid arthritis," Green said.

She said she knows the toxin killed her father.

"It was only on a rare day he could get to church," she said.

Green said her father found meaning in faith during his final years, reconnecting with God and his church.

"He said he never regretted getting a second chance to live," she said.

Thornton said most modern cases of exposure come from old fire extinguishers. The toxin was used heavily in fire extinguishers made between the 1920s and 1960s. Those extinguishers are sometimes found leaking in old garages and basements.

Sons still critically ill in poisoning 'tragedy'

By ALDETH LEWIN (Daily News Staff)

Published: April 7, 2015

A spokesman for the Esmond family - the two adults and their teenage sons who were poisoned from the improper use of the pesticide methyl bromide while vacationing on St. John last month - issued an update on their medical condition Monday.

Theresa Devine has been discharged from the hospital and is doing well, according to the family's attorney, James Maron. Stephen Esmond is improving and stable, he said.

The couple's two sons, Sean and Ryan, still are in critical condition, according to Maron.

"They are confident in their medical professionals and are hopeful for a full recovery," Maron said.

The family had rented Villa Capri at Sirenusa Condominium Resort on St. John from March 14 through March 22.

On March 20, the family was admitted to Schneider Hospital with symptoms of methyl bromide poisoning. Over the course of a few days, all four were airlifted to stateside hospitals for continued treatment.

Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency, which is investigating the incident along with the V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources, confirmed that the chemical found in an adjacent unit was methyl bromide.

A criminal investigation has been launched by the U.S. Justice Department, according to documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

"The family is grateful for the work of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Justice and the local authorities for their investigation of this chemical exposure. The family is confident that the responsible parties will be brought to justice and held accountable," Maron said.

The DPNR and EPA investigation has so far revealed that Terminix treated the unit below the unit the family was staying in on March 18, two days before the family was hospitalized.

Methyl bromide is an odorless gas used as a fumigated pesticide. However, its use is highly restricted because of its toxicity, and it is not supposed to be used in residential environments.

DPNR has issued two "stop use" orders to Terminix, one for each district, to stop using any product containing methyl bromide and to quarantine any of the chemical that may be in the company's possession.

"The Esmond family thanks everyone for their support and concern for their recovery from this

unthinkable tragedy of pesticide poisoning during a family vacation in the United States Virgin Islands. Many questions remain why an odorless pesticide of this level of toxicity could be manufactured, distributed and applied in a residential area resulting in this family's injuries," Maron said.

According to the EPA, the short-term inhalation of methyl bromide can cause severe injury to the lungs. Acute and chronic inhalation of methyl bromide can lead to neurological effects in humans, according to the EPA.

Teens in critical condition; parents slowly improving after exposure to toxins on vacation

Posted 8:27 am, April 7, 2015, by CNN Wire

Teens in critical condition; parents slowly improving after exposure to toxins on vacation

A Delaware father is in stable condition and improving as his two boys remain in critical condition after they became sick — perhaps from pesticide exposure, federal officials say — during a trip to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Steve Esmond, his teenage sons and the teens' mother fell ill more than two weeks ago in St. John, where they were renting a villa at the Sirenusa resort.

The family has confidence in their medical professionals and is hopeful for a full recovery, according to a statement released Monday from the family's attorney, James Maron.

The teens' mother, Theresa Devine, was treated at a hospital and released, and is in occupational therapy, Maron said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Friday that the presence of a pesticide at the rented villa in St. John may have caused the illnesses, which were reported to the EPA on March 20.

Sirenusa Resort- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said Friday, April 3, 2015, it is investigating whether a pesticide used at Sirenusa Residences in the U.S. Virgin Islands may have resulted in a family's illness.

Paramedics were called to the villa, which the family was renting.

Esmond was found unconscious; the boys and their mother were having seizures, Maron said. The lawyer did not say who called the paramedics.

Elias Rodriguez, an EPA spokesman, said the agency's preliminary test results "do show that there was a presence of methyl bromide in the unit where the family was staying."

Exposure to methyl bromide can result in serious health effects, including central nervous system and respiratory system damage, according to the EPA.

The use of the pesticide is restricted in the United States because of its acute toxicity. It's not allowed to be used indoors. Only certified professionals are permitted to use it in certain agricultural settings.

The EPA said it is working with local government agencies to investigate whether the family was made ill after a fumigation at the resort on March 18 and whether any environmental regulations or laws were violated.

EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck said the paramedics were called very early on March 20.

Sea Glass Vacations, which acts as a rental agent for several units at Sirenusa, said the unit directly below the one where the family stayed was recently treated for pests, but their unit was not treated.

The company said it licensed an outside company, Terminix, for the pest control services.

Monday, it ended its contract with Terminix.

In an email to CNN before the termination, a spokesman for Terminix wrote that the company is "committed to performing all work ... in a manner that is safe for our customers, employees, the public and the environment" and is "looking into this matter internally, and cooperating with authorities."

The U.S. Department of Justice has initiated a criminal investigation.

"Many questions remain why an odorless pesticide of this level of toxicity could be manufactured, distributed and applied in a residential area resulting in this family's injuries," Maron said.

The attorney added: "The family is confident that the responsible parties will be brought to justice and held accountable."

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